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ABSTRACT

Black Hawk College's Study Unlimited cooperative program with the River Bend Library System, established in 1972, is presented as a model for community college and public library cooperation in offering off-campus instructional opportunities to new student populations by breaking time and place access barriers. Study Unlimited's objectives are to provide college credit courses, preparation for General Education Development examinations, and assistance in preparing for the College Level Examination Program at public library locations. The courses, of which there are three types, are variable entry/exit, self-paced, and taught by regular college faculty. Videocassette and multi-media courses must be largely completed at the libraries; students may order any necessary materials and take tests in the library and need not come to campus unless they want to attend discussion sections. Take-home courses rely almost entirely on printed material to be completed at home; enrollment and examination services are available at the various libraries. Audiocassette courses may be checked out for a small fee for home use or may be completed in the library. Nearly 35 courses are offered overall on such subjects as English literature, algebra, music, career planning, etc. Since its inception, the Study Unlimited program has been the fastest growing part of the college. Program financing and future plans are discussed. (TR)

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PUBLIC LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

A MODEL FOR OFF-CAMPUS INSTRUCTION

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A Presentation at the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, April 9-12, 1978, Atlanta, Georgia, Forum 7, "Community-Based Humanities Education--Libraries and Community Colleges."

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In 1972, Explorations in Non-Traditional Study suggested the public library as "a major educational center" for the learning experiences of new students, those previously unserved by postsecondary education. Although the Commission on Non-Traditional Study noted the passive role that public libraries have assumed in the educational process, it should be emphasized that libraries do have those resources that are the essential elements in educational service: quantities of information; widely distributed and numerous locations, often far closer to students' homes than college campuses; facilities that may very well include meeting rooms, viewing and listening areas, and equipment for media, and well-educated professional staff members who have been trained to assist patrons in locating information and in learning. It should also be pointed out that those adults who regularly use the resources available in their public libraries are more than likely not currently enrolled in formal college classes,and also generally they have had years of experience as independent learners. Thus, probably one of the most natural and potentially exciting results of the recommendations from the Commission on Non-Traditional Study has been the

cooperative effort of public library and postsecondary education to offer educational services to previously unserved populations.

The forms that such efforts have taken vary from adult independent learner programs assisting those preparing for CLEP to the offering of formal college courses in public library locations. Study Unlimited, Black Hawk College's cooperative program with the River Bend Library System, belongs in the latter category--one model for the cooperation of community college and public library to offer off-campus instruction to new students by breaking the access barriers of time and place.

Black Hawk College, established in 1946, is a public comprehensive community college with two campuses, one located in Moline, Illinois, and the smaller in Kewanee, Illinois. Each year it serves approximately 19,000 individuals from a service population of about 250,000 spread through a district of 2200 square miles. Black Hawk College brought to Study Unlimited an institutional commitment since 1972 to open access to higher education to new populations, strong administrative leadership, and considerable faculty interest and experience in individualized instruction and in the development of television courses for use over its cable hook-up.

The River Bend Library System, established in 1966, is one of 18 such systems in the state of Illinois. Its headquarters is located in the small community of Coal Valley, from where it offers cooperative assistance to 19 public and 21 other libraries, including the Black Hawk College library. The River Bend Library

System brought to Study Unlimited the courage to take a chance, the willingness to share its resources cooperatively, a deep conviction that public libraries must respond to the educational needs of their patrons in new ways, and strong leadership.

Originally, four public libraries joined Study Unlimited. All were located in small communities and three were in rural areas at some distance from campus: the Mineral-Gold Public Library in Mineral, population 300 and 45 miles from campus; the Erie Public Library; the Western Township Library in Orion, and the Silvis Public Library. The next year, two other libraries--the largest in the system--joined the program: the Rock Island Public Library and the Moline Public Library. Although both are located in urban areas and are close to campus, the large use of Study Unlimited by patrons in these libraries suggests that the program does more than remove geographical barriers; it must remove individual barriers as well. The Study Unlimited program is also available in the college's Learning Resource Center.

Public libraries and librarians brought to Study Unlimited an enthusiastic support of the concept of education for all; flexibility, and, again, the all important courage to become involved in a cooperative program. Thus far, the River Bend Library System has contributed eight videocassette players and monitors, van delivery service, and one staff member designated as coordinator. Participating libraries contribute space and service. Each has designated one staff member as primarily responsible for the program. Many have purchased filing cabinets, study carrels,

supplementary hardware and storage shelves, and all provide library services for student-patrons. Black Hawk College provides all instructional services, all materials and software, a coordinator, publicity, and, perhaps the most valuable of all, part-time academic advisers. Considered by the college to be one reason for the program's success, these advisers provide academic and career counseling, training in study skills, explanation of the program in the community, and assistance to librarians in maintaining course materials and supplies.

Study Unlimited's objectives are to offer college-credit courses, preparation for the G.E.D. examination, and assistance in preparing for CLEP at public library locations. All materials placed in the libraries as a part of the program are also available to patrons for use in self-improvement, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled as students. Preparation for the G.E.D. examination is provided by means of a series of videocassettes and by part-time college instructors made available at library centers with the largest G.E.D. enrollment. Study Unlimited offers no course in preparation for the College Level Examination Program, but it does provide materials for self-study and information. Last year, the River Bend Library System became perhaps the first library <u>system</u> in the country to be designated as a CLEP testing center.

Finally, there is the largest part of the Study Unlimited program--college credit courses. All courses are variable-entry, exit. Thus, a student can register for a course on any day and then take up to 20 weeks to complete it. In case of emergencies or vacations, the student can "stop-out" of a course for up to twelve weeks. All courses are self-paced; the student may work as rapidly as he or she wishes and can review past lessons. And, finally, the program brings college-credit courses close to a student's home through the use of public library locations.

Study Unlimited college courses are of three types. There are those that must be completed in large part in libraries--videocassette and multi-media courses. Included are principles of sociology, psychology of women, English literature, freshman composition, mathematics, art appreciation, and American history. Next fall, we're introducing on videocassette the first semester of freshman biology, and, with the course, we'll send along a microscope and 14 boxes of experiments with all supplies and equipment for the student to use in the library. In these courses, the student never has to come to campus unless he wants to attend discussion sessions there. He may register for the course, order textbooks, complete all instruction, and take examinations at the library.

Second, there are the "Tak-Hom-A-Kourses." The "Kits" rely almost entirely upon printed material that may be completed at

home. These are a part of the program because of the convenience of library enrollment and examination services. Included are the Courses by Newspaper, developed with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. And, lately, faculty have been developing their own courses for this part of the program--for example, records management and technical reporting. Third, there are the "Tak-Hom-A-Kassette-Kourses"--audiocassette courses that, for a small fee and deposit, may be checked out from libraries in a box for twenty weeks of home use, or, for no fee, a student may use them in the library. Courses of this type include college algebra, modern fiction, music, accounting, career planning, health, college reading skills, and, very soon, consumer economics, complete with a consumable materials kit. We've sent these courses to army reserve summer camp; to Colorado, Alaska, and Tennessee; on family vacations; and out on the road with a railroad engineer.

By next fall, over thirty-five courses will be available in Study Unlimited and with the exception of one speech course a student will be able to complete an associate of arts degree in Study Unlimited. All courses are taught by our regular, full-time faculty. In most cases, they have designed and developed the courses that they teach, and most courses use the same texts and examinations as campus-based parallel courses. Next year, about fifteen percent of our faculty will be involved in the program.

In the first year, Study Unlimited had an enrollment of 850 semester hours; in its second, of 1560 hours; and, in its third, of above 3000 hours. Thus, it is the fastest-growing part of Black Hawk College. Study Unlimited has received no outside support or grants; it is supported in the same way as all our other college efforts: by local property taxes, student tuition, and state apportionment. Unit cost is not significantly higher than the cost of campus courses, and, with rapidly increasing enrollment, cost is falling greatly. Thus, at a time of lower enrollments, diminishing financial support, and entrenchment, it's easy to justify a program such as Study Unlimited.

Much has resulted from Study Unlimited. Librarians report new adult patrons, who also use other library services. Patrons appreciate the service. Course discussion sessions held at libraries are open to all patrons, and libraries have become a community source of general information on Black Hawk College.

And from Study Unlimited have grown other cooperative programs between Black Hawk College and the River Bend Library System. This fall the library system and participating public libraries joined other community groups as co-sponsors in a model community forum based on the Course by Newspaper "Crime and Justice in America" and supported by a grant from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Town meeting discussions were held in libraries, and

libraries displayed course materials and made available audio-visual materials in support of the discussions. Holding such discussions is considered important in the library system. This spring once again the library system joins the college and other community groups as a co-sponsor of another community discussion, this time on "The Impact of Mass Media on American Life," paralleling the Course by Newspaper "Popular Culture: Mirror of American Life" and supported by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council.

We've also developed two courses as "Tak-Hom-A-Kassette-Kourses" for the visually impaired, made possible in part because of the River Bend Library System's "Talking Book" program.

And, under a federal grant for the last year, the library has been using the college's educational television studio and personnel to prepare videocassettes for use over cable television systems and in libraries throughout the state.

There is no written agreement between public library, library system, and community college. We each try to do our share as much as we are able, and we are all dedicated to the same goal--to flexibly and responsively serve our joint constituency. With such cooperation, we've all found that we can stretch a little farther.

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